

The Montgomery's make a difference for teens

Mary and Henry Montgomery are special...not just because they foster teens, but because they are the kind of individuals you want as your friends, neighbors or relatives. They will make the sacrifices necessary to meet others' needs. They are there for you. Henry has a remodeling business and Mary is a pre-school director. Professionally, they made decisions to enable them to be home to send the kids off to school and to be there again when they come home. This family priority has been a key ingredient to their "recipe" for successful foster care.

Mary and Henry have been foster parents for almost 20 years. For most of 10 years, they have been a family to teenagers. Mary and Henry have fostered boys and girls, as well as providing mutual care for a teen mom and her baby. For the past 10 years, however, they have fostered only boys. Presently they have one 17-year-old boy in their home.

In addition to the foster children they have cared for, they have raised two biological children and have three grandchildren with whom they are very involved.

The Montgomery's are very active in their church. Now two of their former foster children attend their church with their own spouses and children.

In their years as foster parents, the Montgomery's have compiled some impressive statistics:

- Out of approximately 80 children placed in their home, all but 10 have been over the age of 12.
- 22 children stayed between one to five years
- Six youth stayed in their home for over five years (From age 13 to independence)
- Two of their foster children are now foster parents
- They have 15 foster grand-kids
- The Montgomery's recruited a neighbor to become a foster parent and she now has a teenage boy in her home

Mary and Henry love working with teens because lifelong relationships can be developed. Since it is close to the time that the youth become adults, they remember their foster parents and often like to have them in their lives. The Montgomery's maintain contact with many of



*Mary and Henry Montgomery
focus on foster care for
teenage boys*

their former foster children, including the very first child placed in their home 20 years ago. He now lives in North Dakota.

When asked what they would like to say to potential caregivers for teens, they responded, "Remember that you are making a difference in their lives...even though you might not see that difference at the time. Teenagers can be little kids in big bodies."

It is also important to establish rules. Youth should know the consequences if the rules are broken so be consistent, they advise. In a crucial time in their lives, hopefully foster parents can help them grow to be responsible adults.

Get to know your new RVC/foster care program coordinator for training



Rhea Fitch

On February 1, 2004, Rhea Fitch became the new Coordinator of the Foster Care Program at Rock Valley College in

Rockford. In her role, Rhea will oversee the training for pre-service and in-service training. She brings a wealth of personal and professional experience to the job.

Rhea and her husband Ken have been foster parents for 20 years. They have five children, one by birth and four through adoption. David, 26, attends Barton College in Oklahoma and will graduate this Spring. Amanda, 19, is newly married and attends SIUE on a DCFS college scholarship. Philip, 18, is living in a residential facility in Freeport. Grant, 10, is in fourth grade at Marsh School, where he recently received the highest math score for the fourth grade in the whole school district. Mark, six, is a first grader at Marsh School and is the athlete in the house.

Previously, Rhea was one of four Northern Region DCFS Lead Support Specialist for seven years. She decided in 2000 that while the boys were still young she would be a stay-at-home mom. However, rather than

totally stop working, she continued to be an instructor for the PRIDE Training at Rock Valley College. Rhea was then asked to become a Master Trainer for the Foster/Adopt PRIDE Training. Her background as a Lead Support Specialist and a Master Trainer will be of great assistance to her as the Coordinator of the RVC/Foster Care Program.

Here are a few messages Rhea would like to share with foster and adoptive parents:

- She encourages all foster parents to take advantage of the RVC/Foster Care Lending Library...it encompasses a multitude of training topics. These training tools can be used towards your required training hours for re-licensure.
- She looks forward to networking with other providers that offer training throughout the communities.
- She welcomes input about training ideas. Call her at 815-921-2301 and share.

Rhea also wants everyone to note that there has been a change in phone numbers. The new number for the RVC/Foster Care Program is **815-921-2300**. Please call if you have any questions regarding pre-service and/or on-going training.

Extended school year as an option

Students who receive special education services may be eligible for an extended school year (ESY). An extended school year is different from summer school. Extended school year services are provided to a child with a disability, beyond the normal school year, determined by the child's individual education plan (IEP) and provided at no cost to the parents of the child. The length of time the services are delivered is based on individual need.

If you think a child who is receiving special education services would benefit from an ESY contact the child's IEP team and request an IEP meeting to discuss the possibility. There are many factors in determining eligibility, including: the nature of the disability, areas of learning needed for self-sufficiency and independence, extent of regression caused by an interruption in services and the rate of recoupment, as well as the degree of impairment. Local school districts cannot limit ESY to particular categories of disability or unilaterally limit the type, amount, or duration of services.

To receive more information for children in private agencies, contact the education liaison. For cases managed by DCFS, contact the Northern Region education advisors: Rhonda Best (815-967-3750) or Mitch Kremer (847-249-7840).

Famous individuals know foster care firsthand

Tough times as a child did not keep these individuals from success. In some ways time in foster care taught them valuable lessons that helped them later. You can read more about the lives of these famous individuals who know life in foster care first hand at the website fosterclub.com.

Cher

Cher, Cherilyn Sarkasian LaPiere was born on May 20, 1946 in El Centro, California. She was an only child to an aspiring actress. When Cher was two years old, her mother was overcome by illness. At the time, she was a single mother, so Cher was sent to spend time in an orphanage. After she was able to return home, Cher spent a lot of time with her grandmother while her mother worked.

Watching her mother work instilled a love of performance in Cher. As a teen she dreamed of being a star. Her dream continues with a career in music and film.

Eddie Murphy

Comedian and actor Eddie Murphy was just eight years old when he and his brother were sent to a foster home because of his mother's illness. Although he stayed in foster care for just about one year, he credits the experience with helping him develop a sense of humor and making him realize how important it is to find something to laugh about in every situation.

Daunte Culpepper

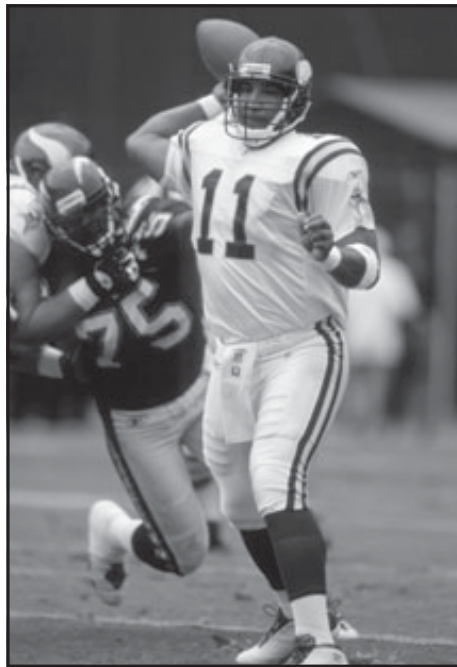


Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Vikings

As quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, Daunte Culpepper makes quite an impact. He stands 6'4" and weighs 265 pounds. He runs a 4.6 second 40-yard dash and can jump 36 inches into the air and can throw the ball 80 yards. In 2003, Daunte signed a ten year \$102 million dollar contract with the team, the highest paying contract in team history and one of the highest in NFL history.

Culpepper gives much of the credit for his football success to his foster mother, Emma Culpepper. She raised him (and 14 other foster children) while his birth mother was imprisoned. Even after being reunified with his mom, Culpepper asked to move back to his foster mother.

Other famous foster kids

- Alonzo Mourning, NBA all star
- Anthony DiCosmo, pro football player
- Charlotte Ayanna, Miss Teen USA 1993 and actress
- Dan O'Brien, 1996 Olympic Gold Medal winner
- Esai Morales, actor
- Ice-T, rap artist and actor
- James Dean, actor
- John Lennon, musician
- Marilyn Monroe, actress
- Ruth Westheimer, psychologist and writer
- Superman, superhero
- Tom Monaghan, Domino's Pizza founder
- Tommy Davidson, comedian and actor
- Victoria Rowell, actress and dancer

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules; local training; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and news articles and support all foster families can use.

Northern Region Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Child Development* - New module being written

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Fostering Experience* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2392

Please call the College of DuPage for upcoming training dates.

Rock Valley Area
815-921-2301, ext. 2305

Module

FREEPORT - Faith United Methodist
May 5, 12, 19 & 26 6-9 p.m. 1
(Wed)

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

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DIXON - Loveland Community Ctr.
June 22 & 29 (Tue) 6-9 p.m.

FREEPORT - Faith United Methodist
May 3 & 10 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

ROCKFORD - Stenstrom Center/RVC
June 10 & 17 6-9 p.m.
June 19 & 26 (Sat) 1-4 p.m.

Understanding risks in the community

Children in placement may become targets because:

- They are in a new environment and they want to belong.
- They may not have had consistent behavioral limits set by the adults in their lives.
- They may go through a period of testing the new foster parents or adoptive parents.

The adults in the child's life need to anticipate hazards. They must try to protect the child from situations that call for a level of behavior or maturity beyond his or her abilities.

Remember that children can be one age in years, and a much different age emotionally and sexually. Foster and adoptive parents must regard each child's strengths and needs individually.

Pre-registration is required for all classes!

Call the number listed for your area to register!